

A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT TO THE SOVIET AFGHAN WAR?

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HAS THE SOVIET POSITION ON A TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN BEEN SHIFTING? IS MOSCOW ABOUT TO ACCEPT WHAT IT HAS IN THE PAST ALWAYS REFUSED EVEN TO DISCUSS?

VARIOUS SOVIET PUBLIC STATEMENTS, BOTH BEFORE AND SINCE THE GENEVA SUMMIT, HAVE BEEN CITED AS IMPLYING A GREATER SOVIET WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN.

THE QUESTION IS, DO THEY? IF ONE IS TO RELY ON VAGUE NOISES EMITTED PUBLICLY BY SOVIET OFFICIALS THERE IS IN FACT NOT MUCH TO GO ON. IN THE FIRST PLACE THESE PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY SIMILAR STATEMENTS IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH U.S. OFFICIALS. SECONDLY, SUCH RUMOURS ABOUT ALLEGED SOVIET GOOD INTENTIONS -- SOMEHOW THESE NEVER MATERIALIZE INTO ANYTHING MORE THAN THAT -- HAVE HAD A HABIT OF CROPPING UP ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS.

SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF THIS TENDENCY SHOULD SERVE AS A USEFUL REMINDER OF THE PROPENSITY FOR DELUSION. THE NEW YORK TIMES, ON FEBRUARY 1, 1980 QUOTED ARMAND HAMMER AS HAVING BEEN TOLD BY THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON THAT "THE SOVIET UNION PLANNED TO WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN, BUT DID NOT SPECIFY WHEN." ADDED ARMAND HAMMER: THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR "HAS NEVER LIED TO ME." ACCORDING TO GEORGE KENNAN (WASHINGTON POST, February 28, 1980) "THE UNITED STATES SHOULD NOT SEEK TO INCREASE THE SOVIET DIFFICULTY THERE, BUT RATHER TO EXPLORE THE HINTS THAT THE SOVIETS

MAY SEEK A WAY OUT." OR AGAIN, SUCH FLAT STATEMENTS AS "THE SOVIET UNION WANTS VERY MUCH TO NEGOTIATE ITS WAY OUT OF AFGHANISTAN" (CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, 12/22/82). DAN RATHER'S PRONOUNCEMENT ON CBS EVENING NEWS (January 25, 1983) THAT "THERE ARE INDICATIONS TONIGHT THAT THE SOVIET UNION MAY BE LOOKING FOR A WAY TO DISENTANGLE ITSELF FROM AFGHANISTAN."

SOME MIGHT CITE RECENT SOVIET "FRANK ADMISSIONS" ABOUT THE COST OF THE WAR, AND ARGUE THAT THE SITUATION, SIX YEARS AFTER THE SOVIET INVASION, IS DIFFERENT. THE WASHINGTON POST, FOR INSTANCE, MADE SUCH A POINT RECENTLY: "SOVIET OFFICIALS, APPARENTLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE TOLL THEIR SIX-YEAR OLD MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN HAS TAKEN, HAVE BEGUN TO VOICE COMPLAINTS ABOUT RISING CASUALTIES AND ADMITTED TO REPORTERS THAT THEY ARE "NOT VERY HAPPY" WITH THE SITUATION." (NOVEMBER 18, 1985) HERE TOO, HOWEVER, WHAT IS BEING SAID AT THE END OF 1985 WAS ALREADY BEING WRITTEN AT THE END OF 1983: "AS THE DIPLOMATIC, MILITARY, AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF ITS INVOLVEMENT HAVE GROWN, MOSCOW HAS SEARCHED FOR A FACE-SAVING WAY OUT." (SELIG HARRISON, USA TODAY, 12/27/83).

THE PREDILECTION FOR SEEING FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS OF A PROFOUND SOVIET LONGING FOR A WITHDRAWAL OF ITS TROOPS HAVE SO FAR ONLY BEEN EVIDENT AMONG SOME WESTERN OBSERVERS. MOSCOW HAS PERIODICALLY ENCOURAGED SUCH SPECULATIONS IN THE WESTERN PRESS PRECISELY BECAUSE THEY SERVE SOVIET PURPOSES.

MOSCOW'S NEGOTIATING POSTURE HAS BEEN CLEAR FROM THE START AND HAS NOT, IN FACT, BUDGED SINCE THEN. IT HAS INSISTED THAT THE QUESTION OF SOVIET TROOP WITHDRAWAL IS A PURELY BILATERAL ISSUE

BETWEEN THE BABRAK KARMAL REGIME AND THE SOVIET UNION AND, THEREFORE, OF NO CONCERN TO OTHER PARTIES. MOSCOW CONTINUES TO ASSERT THAT IT WAS "INVITED" INTO AFGHANISTAN AND THAT, AS A RESULT IT IS UP TO THOSE WHO SO "INVITED" IT IN TO REQUEST A WITHDRAWAL.

EVEN MORE CENTRAL TO ITS NEGOTIATING STANCE, MOSCOW HAS ALWAYS DEMANDED THAT CESSATION OF OUTSIDE SUPPORT TO THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE PRECEDE ANY CONSIDERATION OF A SOVIET TROOP WITHDRAWAL. THE SO FAR NON-NEGOTIABLE NATURE OF THAT DEMAND, ITS "UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER" CHARACTER BY NOW SHOULD HAVE BEEN OBVIOUS TO ALL. MOSCOW IS IN FACT SAYING THAT THE ONLY WAY IT WILL EVER WITHDRAW IS WHEN THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE HAS BEEN ELIMINATED. IN OTHER WORDS, MOSCOW WILL REMOVE ITS TROOPS WHEN THERE IS NO LONGER ANY REASON FOR THEIR BEING IN AFGHANISTAN. (THERE IS STRONG REASON TO DOUBT THAT EVEN THEN THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT WITHDRAW WILLINGLY -- THE HISTORICAL RECORD SPEAKS LOUDLY ON THIS SCORE). IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT ALL THE "HINTS" OF A MODIFICATION IN THE SOVIET POSITION DO NOT EVEN CLAIM THAT THIS CRUCIAL CONDITION IS ABOUT TO BE MODIFIED. THAT IS, WHAT IS BEING BOUNCED AROUND IS THE SO-CALLED EXISTENCE OF A "WITHDRAWAL PLAN" -- NOT THE REMOVAL OF THAT MOST IMPORTANT SOVIET PRE-CONDITION.

FURTHERMORE, THIS SO-CALLED WITHDRAWAL PLAN -- MEANINGLESS WITHOUT THE REMOVAL OF THE SOVIET PRECONDITION ON OUTSIDE SUPPORT TO THE RESISTANCE -- HAS ITSELF BEEN TIED IN PRESS ACCOUNTS TO ANOTHER OF THE COMMUNIST OBJECTIVES, DIRECT TALKS BETWEEN THE PUPPET BABRAK KARMAL REGIME AND THE GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN. ACCORDING TO THE WASHINGTON POST (29 December 1985) THE AFGHAN FOREIGN MINISTER "REPORTEDLY

DECLARED THAT HE HAD DETAILS OF A WITHDRAWAL PLAN IN A FOLDER IN FRONT OF HIM ON THE CONFERENCE TABLE (REFERENCE IS TO THE UN- SPONSORED "PROXIMITY" TALKS IN GENEVA) BUT THAT HE WOULD DISCUSS THEM ONLY FACE-TO-FACE WITH PAKISTANI REPRESENTATIVES -- AND NOT THROUGH THE UNITED NATIONS INTERMEDIARY." THE SOVIET OBJECTIVE IS OBVIOUS: FORCE THE OUTSIDE WORLD, IN THIS CASE THROUGH OBTAINING PAKISTANI ACCEPTANCE OF DIRECT TALKS WITH THE PUPPET BABRAK REGIME, TO GRANT THE LEGITIMACY THAT THAT REGIME HAS BEEN UNABLE OTHERWISE TO ACHIEVE.

IN ADDITION, THE SOVIETS ARE KEENLY AWARE THAT THE VERY MENTION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A DEAL OVER THE HEADS OF THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE SENDS TREMORS THROUGH THE RANKS OF THE MUJAHIDIN. IT IS THAT, AS WELL AS TO SOW CONFUSION AND DOUBT ABOUT EACH OTHER'S MOTIVES IN THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT AND THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE, THAT MOSCOW SEEKS TO ACHIEVE THROUGH TALK OF TIMETABLES FOR WITHDRAWAL. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT, THROUGH SUCH A DIPLOMATIC MOVE, IS ATTEMPTING TO CREATE ANXIETY AND DISTRUST WITHIN THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE AND THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE U.S.'S MOTIVES AND RELIABILITY.

IN ORDER TO LAY TO REST, HOPEFULLY PERMANENTLY, THE RECURRING TENDENCY OF SOME IN THE WEST TO ATTACH SIGNIFICANCE TO SOVIET "WITHDRAWAL" "HINTS", IT IS NECESSARY TO GO BEYOND THE MORE NARROW AND IMMEDIATE SOVIET OBJECTIVES DESCRIBED ABOVE.

WHEN IT IS DISCUSSED, THE WAR IS USUALLY DESCRIBED AS A QUAGMIRE OR A STALEMATE FOR THE SOVIETS. THE REALITY IS, I BELIEVE SOMEWHAT MORE COMPLEX.

THE GENERAL AKNOWLEDGMENT THAT FULLY ONE THIRD -- AND PERHAPS MORE -- OF THE AFGHAN POPULATION HAS EITHER BEEN KILLED OR DRIVEN INTO EXILE, APPARENTLY HAS NOT BEEN SUFFICIENT TO MAKE CLEAR THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN A THUS FAR SUCCESSFUL SOVIET POLICY OF "MIGRATORY GENOCIDE" AND ASSUMPTIONS OF "STALEMATE."

THE FUNDAMENTAL FLAW WITH THE VIEW OF THE WAR AS A STALEMATE, AND HENCE WITH THE DERIVATIVE ASSUMPTION ABOUT WAR WEARINESS AND AN ALLEGED SOVIET DESIRE FOR WITHDRAWAL, IS THAT IT MISUNDERSTANDS THE CHARACTER OF THE WAR, FOCUSING ON THE SHORT TERM, AND EXCLUDING THE SOVIET PERCEPTION OF THINGS. IN PART THE REASON FOR THIS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO AMERICAN TENDENCIES TO PROJECT OR MIRROR IMAGE. AMERICANS CANNOT EASILY VISUALIZE ANYTHING BUT A QUICK WAR, A "KNOCKOUT PUNCH." THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE IN THE SOVIET-AFGHAN WAR, IN WHICH SUCH MANIFESTLY UNEQUAL POWER IS CLEARLY IN EVIDENCE. ANYTHING SHORT OF CLEARCUT AND RAPID VICTORY, IT SEEMS, IS AUTOMATICALLY PORTRAYED AS A STALEMATE.

NO DOUBT MOSCOW FIRST THOUGHT THAT THE MASSIVE REBELLION IT ITSELF PROVOKED COULD BE SQUASHED BY ITS AFGHAN PUPPETS WITH LITTLE DIRECT SOVIET INVOLVEMENT. NO DOUBT IN THE PERIOD IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SOVIET INVASION, MOSCOW MAY HAVE BELIEVED THAT ITS SHOW OF FORCE WOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO DESTROY ANY OPPOSITION. THE REALIZATION THAT IT WAS DEALING WITH AN UNUSUAL ENEMY, HOWEVER, CAME QUICKLY. WITHIN THE FIRST YEAR FOLLOWING ITS INVASION, MOSCOW SETTLED INTO A LONG-TERM STRATEGY WHOSE BASIC OBJECTIVE HAS BEEN TO OUTLAST THE RESISTANCE, DESTROYING IN THE PROCESS ITS SUPPORT BASE. THE SOVIETS HAVE THEMSELVES ON OCCASION MADE REFERENCE TO THEIR

COLONIZATION/ANTI-INSURGENCY CAMPAIGNS OF THE NINETEEN TWENTIES AND THIRTIES IN WHAT IS NOW SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA AS A MODEL FOR THEIR CURRENT STRATEGY. AND WHILE, IN ESSENCE, THE SOVIETS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO "EMPTY THE WATER OUT OF THE FISHBOWL," THEREBY ULTIMATELY KILLING THE FISH, THEY HAVE ALSO SYSTEMATICALLY -- AND MOST OF THE TIME UNSUCCESSFULLY -- ATTEMPTED TO COOPT AFGHANS.

IDEAL CONDITIONS FOR THE PURSUIT OF A LONG-TERM STRATEGY OF THIS SORT WOULD BE THE CESSATION OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR THE RESISTANCE, AS WELL AS IGNORANCE OF THE CONFLICT BY THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

CESSATION OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT WOULD RAPIDLY LEAD TO ALMOST COMPLETE IGNORANCE BY THE OUTSIDE WORLD. THE VARIOUS HUMANITARIAN AND MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS FROM VARIOUS EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND THE UNITED STATES WOULD ALSO DISAPPEAR, AND TOGETHER WITH THEM, NO DOUBT, WHATEVER INTEREST THERE HAS BEEN IN THE WAR. MOSCOW WOULD THEN BE ABLE, QUIETLY AND WITHOUT ANY RESTRICTIONS WHATSOEVER, SYSTEMATICALLY TO DESTROY ANY MEANINGFUL OPPOSITION TO ITS RULE. AND, WHILE THE SOVIETS NO DOUBT DO NOT BELIEVE THEIR OWN PROPAGANDA DESCRIBING THE WAR AS AN "UNDECLARED WAR LAUNCHED BY THE IMPERIALISTS," THEY ARE CONFIDENT THAT WITHOUT EXTERNAL HELP THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE WILL -- ESPECIALLY AT THE CURRENT LEVEL OF FIGHTING -- BECOME QUICKLY DEMORALIZED AND SUBJUGATED. THE SOVIETS ARE ALSO CLEARLY CONSCIOUS OF THE IMPACT THAT CESSATION OF AID TO THE MUJAHIDIN WOULD HAVE ON THE MILLIONS OF REFUGEES NOW IN PAKISTAN AND IRAN. IN THEIR RAGE AND DESPAIR AT BEING THUS ABANDONED, THE MUJAHIDIN MIGHT WELL TURN AGAINST THE PAKISTANIS, THEREBY UNWITTINGLY

FURTHERING SOVIET DESIGNS.

CURRENT SOVIET "HINTS" ABOUT "WITHDRAWAL" AND "TIMETABLES," TALKS ABOUT A POSSIBLE ENLARGEMENT OF THE KABUL REGIME TO INCLUDE OTHER POLITICAL ELEMENTS, THE ATTEMPT TO COOPT WESTERN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS IN THIS SOVIET PEACE OFFENSIVE, ARE ALL DESIGNED TO FURTHER THE ABOVE SOVIET OBJECTIVES. PUT SOMEWHAT DIFFERENTLY, THE SOVIETS HAVE USED THE UN SPONSORED TALKS TO LULL THE REST OF THE WORLD INTO BELIEVING THAT THE PROBLEM IS SOLVABLE THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS ALONE, THAT IF ONLY "MODERATION" WERE EXERCISED BY OUTSIDE POWERS, THAT IF ONLY WE COULD GIVE THE SOVIETS "SOME HELP," THE PROBLEM WOULD BE SOLVED.

ONE MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED A SYSTEMATIC SOVIET CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE WISHFUL THINKING IN THE WEST TO BE ACCOMPANIED, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT TERM, BY SOME ATTENUATION IN THE LEVEL OF FIGHTING, AS WELL AS IN THE LEVEL OF PRESSURE PLACED ON BOTH THE RESISTANCE AND ON THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT. THE OPPOSITE HAS BEEN TRUE. SOVIET MILITARY ACTIONS HAVE CONTINUED THROUGH THE AFGHAN WINTER AND, AS THE WALL STREET JOURNAL NOTED ON JANUARY 9, 1986, THERE HAS BEEN A MARKED INCREASE IN SOVIET ARMS SHIPMENTS TO AFGHANISTAN IN RECENT WEEKS. PERHAPS THIS TELLS US SOMETHING ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF RESPECT, OR LACK OF IT, MOSCOW HAS FOR WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION.

THE QUESTION WHICH REMAINS THEN, IS NOT WHETHER THE SOVIETS ARE NOW IN FACT SERIOUSLY CONTEMPLATING WITHDRAWAL, BUT WHY THEY HAVE CHOSEN TO MAKE SUCH A CONCERTED EFFORT AT DECEPTION AT THIS TIME.

ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER WAS GIVEN AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS

PRESENTATION. IT IS SIMPLY THAT MOSCOW HAS MADE SUCH NOISES PERIODICALLY, ESPECIALLY AROUND SPECIAL EVENTS SUCH AS THE RECENT SUMMIT, OR AROUND THE TIME OF SESSIONS OF THE U.N. SPONSORED TALKS. THE MAGNITUDE OF THE CURRENT EFFORT SUGGESTS ADDITIONAL EXPLANATIONS. ONE SUCH ADDITIONAL ELUCIDATION IS THAT THE "PEACE" CAMPAIGN ON AFGHANISTAN IS PART OF A WORLDWIDE SOVIET PEACE OFFENSIVE THAT COVERS A BROAD RANGE OF SUBJECTS. IN ALL OF THEM, HOWEVER, MOSCOW'S OBJECTIVE IS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE WILLINGNESS IN THE WEST TO GIVE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT TO A NEW SOVIET LEADER, TO PORTRAY THE SOVIET UNION AS "PEACE-LOVING," AND TO MAKE THE POINT THAT WITH SOME CONCESSIONS BY THE WEST, BETTER, MORE TRANQUIL RELATIONS CAN SOON BE RE-ESTABLISHED.

THERE IS A THIRD, AND IN THE CONTEXT OF AFGHANISTAN, MORE IMPORTANT POSSIBLE EXPLANATION, AND THAT IS THAT MOSCOW IS RESPONDING AT THE DIPLOMATIC LEVEL, AS WELL AS AT THE MILITARY AND OTHER LEVELS, TO THE CHANGING SITUATION ON THE GROUND. LET ME EXPLAIN.

THE SOVIETS NO DOUBT EXPECTED THAT WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME INTEREST IN THE SOVIET-AFGHAN WAR WOULD WANE. THEY NO DOUBT EXPECTED TO CONTINUE FACING A LESS AND LESS EFFECTIVE, PRIMITIVE, AND PRIMITIVELY ARMED RESISTANCE THAT COULD BE WORN OUT WITH MEASURED SOVIET POWER.

THE OPPOSITE HAS HAPPENED. INTEREST IN, AND OPPOSITION TO, THE WAR HAS GROWN IN THE SIX YEARS SINCE THE SOVIET INVASION. VOTES IN FAVOR OF THE ANNUAL UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION DEMANDING

SOVIET WITHDRAWAL HAVE ENCOMPASSED LARGER AND LARGER MAJORITIES, AND INCLUDE ALMOST EVERY MEMBER WITH THE EXCEPTION OF COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS TO RELIEVE SOME OF THE BARBARIC CONDITIONS IN WHICH THE AFGHAN PEOPLE HAVE BEEN PLACED BY SOVIET ACTIONS, HAS GROWN SIGNIFICANTLY, AND NOW REPRESENTS MANY NATIONS. THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE, THOUGH SUFFERING HEAVILY, HAS BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE AND IS NOW BETTER EQUIPPED THAN IN THE PAST. IN SHORT, THE SOVIETS PROBABLY FEEL THAT THEIR DUAL STRATEGY OF OUTLASTING THE RESISTANCE WHILE ENSURING NO MORE THAN MINIMAL OUTSIDE INTEREST IS BEING THREATENED BY CURRENT TRENDS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO POINT OUT THAT WHAT MAY THUS BE THREATENED IS NOT NECESSARILY THE ULTIMATE SOVIET OBJECTIVE OF SUBJUGATION, BUT MOSCOW'S ABILITY TO MOVE TOWARD THAT OBJECTIVE WITH A RELATIVELY LIMITED MILITARY COMMITMENT, AND WITH NO MORE THAN MINIMAL EXTERNAL ATTENTION TO BOTH THE CONFLICT AND SOVIET METHODS IN WAGING IT. FURTHERMORE, SUCH SOVIET ABILITY TO MOVE TOWARD THE OBJECTIVE OF SUBJUGATION IN THE FASHION OUTLINED WILL BECOME SIGNIFICANTLY THREATENED ONLY WITH THE CONTINUATION OF CURRENT TRENDS TOWARD A BETTER EQUIPPED, MORE EFFECTIVE, RESISTANCE, AND WITH GREATER WORLDWIDE INTEREST. THEN, THE CHOICE BEFORE THEM WOULD BECOME ONE BETWEEN WITHDRAWAL AND ESCALATION. THE SITUATION WOULD BECOME ONE IN WHICH THE SOVIETS WOULD, AS I HAVE STATED IT ELSEWHERE, HAVE TO ESCALATE IN ORDER TO WIN, BUT FAIL TO ACHIEVE THEIR ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE IF THEY DID ESCALATE.

THE PRESENT SOVIET APPROACH -- HARD AND INTENSE ON THE BATTLE-FIELD, SOFT-SOUNDING IN THE DIPLOMATIC ARENA -- IS RESPONDING TO

THE DEVELOPING SITUATION BY CONVEYING IN ESSENCE A SINGLE MESSAGE.

THAT MESSAGE IS THAT THEY ARE AS DETERMINED AS EVER TO DESTROY AND SUBJUGATE THE RESISTANCE; THAT NEITHER THE RESISTANCE NOR THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT SHOULD PUT TOO MUCH FAITH IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD BECAUSE IT WILL ABANDON THEM AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY. HENCE THE CONTINUATION OF MILITARY OPERATIONS AT AN INTENSE LEVEL THROUGH THE WINTER; HENCE THE CONTINUED CAMPAIGN OF INTIMIDATION TOWARD THE AFGHANS AND PAKISTANIS. HENCE ALSO THE "HINTS" OF WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLES, DESIGNED TO UNDERCUT OUTSIDE INTEREST AND SUPPORT BY ENCOURAGING THE BELIEF THAT INCREASING RESTRAINT BY THE OUTSIDE WORLD IS THE ONLY WAY TO A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. THE "TOUGH" COMPONENT OF THE SOVIET TECHNIQUE IS, IF ANYTHING, MEANT TO ENHANCE FURTHER THE APPEAL OF THE "PEACE" COMPONENT BY INTIMATING THAT EMBRACING THE LATTER IS THE ONLY WAY OUT OF AN AN INCREASINGLY PAINFUL COURSE.

IN CONCLUSION, MOSCOW HAS PROBABLY DECIDED THAT IT HAS LITTLE TO LOSE FROM THE CURRENT EXERCISE IN DECEPTION. AT THE VERY LEAST IT WILL HAVE INJECTED AN ADDITIONAL DOSE OF DISTRUST AND SUSPICION ON THE PART OF THE MUJAHIDIN AND OF THE PAKISTANIS TOWARD THE OUTSIDE WORLD, AND HELPED DEMORALIZE SOMEWHAT THE RESISTANCE. SHOULD SOVIET PRESSURES FOR DIRECT PAKISTANI NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PUPPET KARMAL REGIME SUCCEED -- FOR SUCH IS THE PRICE DEMANDED FOR THE PAKISTANIS TO SEE, AND DISCUSS, THE WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLE -- MOSCOW WOULD HAVE ACHIEVED THE LEGITIMACY THAT REGIME CANNOT OTHERWISE ATTAIN. BEYOND THIS, MOSCOW UNDERSTANDS FULLY WELL THAT DEMOCRACIES, ONCE HAVING TAKEN A STEP

BACK FROM COMMITMENT, FIND IT MORE DIFFICULT TO RECOMMIT. HENCE THE ATTEMPT TO ERODE THAT COMMITMENT THROUGH APPEALS TO POWERFUL IMPULSES IN THE WESTERN PSYCHE.

THE CURRENT SERIES OF SOVIET "HINTS," THEN, DOES NOT CONVEY A GREATER WILLINGNESS TO ACTUALLY WITHDRAW. THE FACT THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE FOUND IT NECESSARY TO PUT FORTH HINTS OF WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLES, HOWEVER, DOES SUGGEST THAT THEY FEEL THEY NOW MUST GO TO GREATER LENGTHS TO OBTAIN THE SAME RESULTS AS BEFORE. DIPLOMATICALLY SPEAKING, THIS MAY BE PROGRESS OF SORTS. WE WILL KNOW THAT WE ARE FACING A CHANGED SITUATION WHEN MOSCOW NO LONGER INSISTS THAT CESSATION OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT MUST PRECEDE TALK OF SOVIET WITHDRAWAL. WHEN WILL THE SOVIETS DECIDE TO WITHDRAW? ONE POSSIBILITY IS THAT THEY WILL DO SO ONLY WHEN THE COSTS BECOME GREAT ENOUGH. THE OTHER IS THAT MOSCOW WILL RECOGNIZE BEFORE IT ACTUALLY FACES THE QUESTION OF ESCALATION, THAT THE COSTS OF SUCH A COURSE WILL BE SO GREAT AS TO NEGATE ANY POTENTIAL BENEFITS. OUR HOPE SHOULD THEREFORE BE THAT THE SOVIETS WILL UNDERSTAND SOONER, RATHER THAN LATER, THAT IT IS IN THEIR INTEREST TO WITHDRAW FROM AFGHANISTAN AND ALLOW THAT BRAVE PEOPLE TO RESUME CONTROL OF THEIR OWN DESTINY, FREE FROM THE HORRORS AND SUFFERING THAT THE CURRENT ATTEMPT AT COLONIZATION CARRIES WITH IT.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.